

Lek watched over the baby, while Sái turned towards Duan. "One looks to the mother first, unless the baby needs help more." First Sái gave Duan medicine for the placenta. She rubbed her hands with alum and tried unsuccessfully to work down (klom) the slippery placenta. Then she told Duan to get on her hands and knees, and exert all the force she could. Duan crept around the floor but it still did not come. Sái then tried hitting Duan's back 3 times with Duan's own pillow. Finally she gave Duan a leaf of betel pepper to chew, hoping to induce a wind-producing nausea and so push out the placenta. In the end Duan resumed her sitting position and it was pressed out. So the baby would not get pimples, the placenta was cleaned carefully, then put into an old pot, mixed with 2 dishes of salt, and set aside. 844

While Lek sewed up the partially completed cushion, Sái laid the baby along her legs, and washed him with soap. Sometimes she washed the baby before the cord was cut, if the placenta came quickly. She used salt to remove the greasy fat from his body, though would have preferred "fermented tamarind to protect him from pustules that enlarge to sores (rök phu-phong)." "Soft tissue like a stomach covering his head! What a good sign of progress and fortune!" she exclaimed. She powdered him with face powder (dinaophong), and painted his abdomen with turmeric,³⁴ "so wind will not make him cry." Covering him with a little piece of old cloth, she laid him on Lek's old winnowing tray (kradong). [751]

It was the moment to winnow (rön) the baby, and link it to home and family. While Lek got the holy unspun cord, others placed on the tray with the baby all manner of traditional things to influence the progress and well-being of the child during his lifetime. Sái put on the phlai, the clod of soil, and the tapered bamboo she had used to cut the cord "because they will never be used again," but actually these things had a far deeper meaning to all present. Song laid on a school exercise book and pencil, so that his son would have knowledge and a good memory. Hí got a needle for sharp wit. If the baby had been a girl, the needle would have given sewing skills. When all was in readiness, Duan had to decide on the ones to raise the child aloft, catch the tray as it was dropped, and bless him as the holy thread was tied on. She had to choose these persons carefully, for the child [787]
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34. Other mixtures (used also on the mother) were lime-bergamot lemon; or phlai (if possible the one on which the cord was cut); wannam (acorus calamus) (Textor:64-66) and mahahing (asafoetida) with burned betel leaf. These were all to keep out wind. 844
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844 would later manifest their characteristics. Much as Duan
 989 loved her own mother, Lek ought not to winnow the child
 • 852 because she had had the misfortune to lose 3 babies in
 infancy. An older person was desirable, for longevity, too,
 indicated virtue, and the child would then also live long.
 Of all the women present, besides her mother, Sai was the
 one Duan trusted and respected most, and Sai had raised
 healthy babies. Duan turned to her. "Please winnow and
 bless the baby." She wanted, as every mother did, to catch
 and so claim the child for herself.

[539] Sai seated herself close to Duan, picked up and raised
 high the tray with the little boy and the auspicious items.
 Waving the tray in a circular motion slowly from left to
 right, clockwise, she recited the old words: "Three days
 a spirit child; on the fourth day, a human child! Whose
 child is this? Is this the child of a female pot? Of a
 jar? Come, take this child!" Three times Sai chanted
 these old words and on the third, Duan cried out, "Mine!"
 The tray with the child was gently tossed in her direction.
 She caught it as it slid toward her. Then Sai took the
 [774] holy thread and tied some around each of the child's wrists
 and ankles to seize and "welcome" its soul (khanraphkwan),
 giving the while the traditional blessing. "Come, khwan!"
 [539] Come my own child! Stay well and eat well! Do not get
 sick or have fever! Be cool and happy! Feed your father
 and mother until they are old. Hold the walking stick
 with the gold head, or the stick with jewels on its top!
 Stay at home like the bottom of the house post! Watch
 the house like a cat! Eat and stay here! Never go roam-
 ing! Be fat as the golden ash pumpkin, heavy as the long
 melon, strong as an elephant in must! Be the head priest
 when ordained and the leader of men when you leave the
 priesthood! Come, khwan!"³⁵ Thus, Duan claimed the child
 for herself and for her family, to nourish and raise.
 Because such a fine person as Sai had started this son on
 its life-habits, and Duan was already sparing no efforts in
 assuring his progress, he would be a good boy, and
 reciprocate her pain and effort.

[539] 35. Another version added the words, "Have the strength of
 Hanuman! Hold the stick with the iron head! Be a student."
 For a girl, "If you have a family, keep cool and happy!
 Earn your livelihood (than ma ha kin)! Have enough to use
 and eat! Do not lower (ram) your face, or eyes," i.e. "don't
 be poorer than your friend." A China-born Thai woman's
 blessing was "Mother, nourish, and care for this child. Do
 not let it be hurt or have fever."

761 Since only meritorious children were born into the
 775 "right family," they were helpful and so easy to raise. The
 593 easiest to raise were reincarnations of babies deceased in
 829 the mother's present life. "A girl of three died. Her father
 782 dreamed he was at her coffin. She asked for water which he
 gave her, then brought her home. Months later a boy was
 born, so easily raised up that people knew it was a rein-
 carnation of that girl." Here amiability and the change to
 male sex demonstrated merit. In another tale, "a woman lost
 many babies at birth. Her husband, thinking it was the same
 child trying to be born to that mother, marked the forehead
 of the last deceased baby. His surmise proved correct,
 because the next baby born had this mark on its forehead."

This assumption that a woman's children were born to
 her over and over led to a measure of control over the
 cooperativeness of the child in the womb. A child trained
 to "good habits" became a meritorious adult who, when re-
 born, would of course "help" his mother in childbirth. It
 was advisable to set one's own child into paths of proper
 behavior, for he could be born again to a descendant, and
 in all likelihood to oneself.

On the other hand, families were not closed groups.
 "Like a leech that sticks in one place, then goes to stick
 somewhere else, so a deceased person may be reborn some-
 where else," said a priest. The marriage blessing stated,
 "May angels, not criminals or beggars, reincarnate as your
 children." Thus was explained why upright parents might
 have a disobedient, roaming child. He had roamed into a
 new family which perhaps he had met during a pleasant
 casual visit to them in another life. If he did not stay
 home to make merit with his present family, a wayward child
 would roam out of it as easily as he came in. Here was the
 ultimate danger in visiting around too much.

761 Because all individuals lacking in merit died off at
 593 birth, some of whom because they got into the wrong family,
 782 a selective process continuously weeded out the extremely
 [163] non-meritorious so that those who were born usually sur-
 vived. In fact, Hauck's figure of 90.6 live births
 (1955:33), the percentage of total pregnancies shows how
 many meritorious babies were born to the right family!

• 852 The Winnowing Ceremony

844 This ceremony, described in Duan's tale, was usually
 774 performed shortly after delivery, though it might occur
 anytime during the first three days of a baby's life. The
 child, placed on the tray (twins were laid together or
 separately) was claimed by the mother or the father, who

called out "Mine!" ("khong chan" (female speaking) or "phon" (male speaking)). Never did a parent say "ours!"⁴⁴ Sometimes the mother might ask a relative or friend present to claim the child, and so become a godparent.

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As the first human step to control the volatile khman, the first objective of winnowing a baby was to seize it (kan rap khman) and so "complete" the child's person.⁴⁵ By tying holy thread at the wrist and ankle soul-exits, the khman which had flitted in and out of the womb was given rest. It was still flighty, but now it had a life-long home.

Secondly, the child was given membership in a human family. Connection through blood and semen did not establish kinship. At first, the child hovered between corporeal and non-corporeal existence. "The child is not fully human for the first 3 days." This period was under the supernatural control of Mother Su, for babies "never died during the first 3 days after birth. They might be born dead or they died 6 or 7 days later." The shock of dropping the child on the tray "made him forget his life as a spirit." When someone cried "mine!" the child finally cut his relationship with the spirit-world. As an old woman explained, "The ties are the important part [of the ceremony]. They show that the child belongs to someone. Once a tie fell off one wrist. The child cried and cried until it was restored," fearing its lost khman would attach itself elsewhere. The claiming set up kinship as a contract before witnesses. Whoever announced responsibility for the child's care, and this was usually the mother, deserved reciprocal care in old age. Other relatives would also help to bring him through to maturity. He would not be so frightened of an evil spirit because of family support, nor of the "ghost of an ancestor" who would be recognized as a relative.

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Third, the ceremony strengthened the child. By giving him through the ties a stable khman, he "grew better, cried less, and did not get sick."

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The incorporation of as many auspicious elements as possible into the ritual was customary. Since the child took

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⁴⁴. A winnowing tray (basket) had the capacity to "trap" spirits. It could seize or trap not only the khman soul, but, at New Year's, one of the fun ghosts (Tentor:171).

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⁴⁵. There is no convenient way of expressing "ours" in Thai in this restricted sense (id.).

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after whoever claimed him, a mother might ask a "wealthy person, of polite, calm, and good character" to do this. The baby also started an association with whatever items were placed on his tray with him. Besides the most common ones mentioned in Dian's tale were ink and books (which induced learning); gold, rings, jewelry, money (wealth); bergamot thorn, a tin of haffir lime (sharp wit); and a razor (a good wood-cutter for the fire; said to be a Muslim custom). When the baby was finally transferred from tray to cradle these items were returned to household use. The bamboo cutter, rhinoceros of ahlai, and earth associated with cutting the cord were taken off the tray and buried with the placenta. Their significance lay as part of a binding ritual. The ahlai and earth might be taken off ahead of time.

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Binding Rituals

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Because Sang Chan accorded autonomy to every individual, whatever his age, everyone had the free choice to go wherever his advantage lay. In infancy and childhood, the khman soul might flee at any time, and could only be recaptured by a khman-calling or khman-leading rite (Texter: 396-411). After about the age of 8, a than khman ceremony helped to bind in and strengthen the khman soul. In daily life, the fear that a loved one, whatever his age, would withdraw or run away if unhappy, frightened, or overburdened, dogged people their whole lives. Casual episodes were sometimes viewed with alarm. Once a boy of 10 on his own initiative went off to live a few days with his grandmother only 10 minutes away by boat. His mother complained that he had wandered (pai thiao) and feared it would become a habit. Parents dreaded that grown children would find work away from the village; that daughters would elope; that adopted children or spouses run away; or even that their child, at marriage, would elect to go live with his in-laws. At any time a husband might go into the priesthood leaving his wife and children to fend for themselves, though here the wife had to give her permission and the motive was sympathetically viewed.

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A traditional jesting threat was to "go away to the jungle-forest" (nai na).

The economic and social base for this fear of losing a child to the world was that children were a parental investment with an anticipated return: for the trouble of bearing and raising them, children should work for the family until their marriage. Furthermore, a boy was to bring his parents merit by being ordained, while a girl was to care for them in their old age. If a child moved away

before completing these obligations, the parents lost out on their anticipated reward (cf. L.H. Hanks, 1962).

Since waywardness (*nai thiao*) was considered a continuous threat, magical means were taken at the moment of birth to ensure that a child stay close to the family that raised him. The blessing following the winnowing ceremony invoked immovable things: the post, the cat that traditionally never roamed far, the pumpkin that eat and fattened:

"...Stay at home like the bottom of the House post. Watch the house like a cat. Eat and stay here! Never leave home. Be fat and heavy as the ash pumpkin..."

The most important binding actions utilized, or brought the child into physical contact with, objects long associated with family, in particular the house and land. The umbilical cord was cut on earth or *phlai* dug from the house-land itself with a bamboo "knife" sliced from one of the deeply sunk house posts. Of these "the knife is the important thing." The *phlai* also had medicinal purposes. With a feather "from the mother's house" the baby's navel was smeared with cobwebs from a spider whose web indicated long undisturbed residence. They buried the placenta either under some large old tree that stood near the house, or under the house stair. The old family winnowing tray, old clothes, and well-used family possessions were used first before any new furnishings were purchased for the baby. A fire of *sakas* wood grown on premises boiled the water for the baby and mother, and heated the mother. *Sakas* "was planted when a house was first built so that every generation of occupants would have it available for use at confinement" and also for firewood at other times (cf. McF. 83a). All these binding rites assured that the child being rooted to a home terrain, would not wander frightened, and so "would not cry." He also would be at home to participate in the merit-making that would reconstitute the family in another existence.

If a child were born away from home, how was this bond to his locality established? On one to two occasions when the child was born at the Minburi Health Center, Hauck (notes, 1954) observed a solution to this dilemma. The mothers returned home, as was customary, within a few hours of delivery and were established by their respective fires. Their babies were winnowed and laid on their trays with the usual auspicious book, pencil, and needle. Neither tray held any bamboo, elod, nor *phlai*, however, for these had not been used. On one tray, though, was laid a steel knife from the kitchen, mute proof that a family cutting instrument ought to be there. On another occasion, a father asked to be given his child's placenta so as to bury it on the house site. In so far as possible, people

in Bang Chan tried to carry on the old rites.

795 the slight differences in ministrations. "The Muslim mid-
 795 wife messages were more than the Buddhist." The women easily
 844 entered into reciprocal courtesies. The Muslim woman knew
 591 the steps in the Buddhist winnowing ceremony and performed
 1852 them as desired. One Buddhist mother disapproved, however,
 with the winnowing "because the midwife was Muslim." A
 Buddhist woman made up the Alman Alma in the fashion
 specified by the Muslim midwife and participated in the
 latter's teacher-rite.

795 Certain fundamental ideas of the Muslims led to rein-
 799 terpretations of familiar Buddhist terms and activities.
 774 "Alman" referred to the soul, but with no implication of
 782 reincarnation. "Alma," meaning "merit" to the Buddhist,
 177 meant charitable giving in the sense of tithes, for Islam
 prescribed that a portion of one's income be given to the
 poor. On the other hand, the Muslims had taken over many
 Buddhist practices: for one, the acceptance of Buddhist
 holy water as a cure for spirit attack.

795 Completely Muslim was the stress on physical and
 783 moral purification as an objective of every rite, and
 304 conversely, the prevalence of the idea of defilement.
 764 "Circumcision is to cleanse the body before growing up,"
 it was said. Muslim mortuary rites were elaborate pro-
 cedures for purification. When a Muslim baby died, the
 Buddhist midwife said, "The body was cleaned before
 1831 burial," implying thorough measures beyond his ordinary
 experience. Procreation was viewed as dangerous and
 1834 contaminating. The behavior that hid sexual phenomena at
 562 the same time by constant prescriptions kept sexuality
 much more in mind. Muslims separated males from females,
 for example, at feasts. No Muslim male ever became a
 midwife.

795 The events surrounding childbirth illustrated the
 843 differing viewpoints between Muslim and Buddhist. In the
 844 seventh month of her pregnancy, a Muslim woman called on
 on her chosen midwife, and gave her a gift of betel
 pepper leaves and areca nut to assure her services (Alma
 273 Alma: to deposit gold). On returning home, she went as
 fast as possible "to insure fast delivery." Since
 Muslims frowned on liquor, their medicines were made up
 of hot-tasting spices in hot water. Yet one Muslim mid-
 wife prescribed large doses of liquor before and during
 795 parturition. For labor and delivery, a Muslim was
 844 stricter about utilizing the privacy of the small enclo-
 562 sed room, if there were one, while in the Buddhist house-
 hold "it could be anywhere" in the house. Muslim men,
 except for husband, brother, or father, were excluded
 from the scene. The Muslim Alma Alma contained "

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child and husband enter under the house "so the child would not run away from home." The circumcision (ahim) performed up to the eleventh year, allied a child to a human group. "Circumcision is to accept the new-born baby into the status of human beings" in a corresponding ceremony for girls, the To Inan "cut a little piece of the labia." However, some Muslims had the full welcoming ceremony performed. If it were not, the child was raised aloft in the midwife's hands with the words, "Mother Si, Mother San, may this child be cool and happy." The new-born baby was then laid in a cloth cradle. Fruits were hung over the tray or cradle. If a lactating Muslim mother accepted another's child to nurse, the 2 babies had to be of the same sex "lest later in life they marry, in which case theirs would be an incestuous, brother-sister marriage." The Buddhists entertained no such idea, so nursed babies of either sex as needed. A Muslim view of colostrum as "like pee from a cat" carried a more negative overtone than the Buddhist's statement: "At first the mother's milk is too dilute to be useful."

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At the annual homage of a Muslim midwife to her teacher each of her patients of the year sent a kilogram of sugar, one coconut, one or 2 liters of glutinous rice, and a hen (if a baby girl had been born) or a rooster (if a boy). The chicken was killed by the midwife and made into curries for mosque officials (seen) invited to the ceremony. The incense and candles were burned "while she thinks of her teacher."

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In Bang Chan when donations for a new school

building warranted buying the foundation materials, so that volunteer labor was solicited for their installation, some of the money went into food, despite additional donations of food. This was in no way misappropriation. Helping to cook was as important as helping to dig the holes.

The spirit-offering, or the portions eaten by a participant as a sacrament, were actually tiny bits of each food. Afterward, the entire lay-out, pork, sweetmeats and all, was eaten. Because all this was holy food, it was felt to be especially strengthening, so was usually given to children, but might be eaten by family members and occasionally, priests. The pork was cut up and eaten with a hot sauce, or put into a "with-rice" dish. It was especially appropriate with liquor.

The use of food ritually was not limited to the ceremonial season nor to big events. The same purposes underlay the use of a hard-boiled egg eaten in the ceremony that was designed to restore a child "sick from temporary loss of its soul," and in another performed in order to wean a baby.

The benefits of a (lingan) accrued to every participant down to the last worker and contributor according to the degree of assistance. With status in this and in later lives at stake, no one hesitated to plunge into debt or even to sell land. For the sake of economy two different ceremonies might be performed on the same day, for example a child's topknot cutting at a daughter's wedding.¹ The saving was in time and expense for food preparation, but such multiple ceremonies were performed less often than one might expect.

One assistance in the financing was that every invited guest made a contribution, customarily 5 to 10 baht, which helped defray the costs. In 1952, household heads reported these contributions as totalling from 10 to 1,000 baht, with an average of 36 for the year (Janlekha, 1955). Of 96 household heads who provided information on special expenses during the 5-year period March, 1948 through February, 1953, 36 had given (lingan) with net expenditures (costs minus contributions) ranging from -10² to 15,000 baht. The average net cost was 1,144 baht (Janlekha, 1955). These figures might represent a single (lingan) or several events.

1. Every desired ritual could be carried out at little cost. Thus a priest-candidate whose father was dead, was included in the pre-ordination festivities planned for a friend; and on one occasion five bodies were cremated at the same ceremony, which was sponsored by the kin of one of the deceased.

2. The -10 meant that contributions exceeded the cost.

435 Some information as to the cost in baht of the larger
196 ceremonies held in 1954, and their scale, was obtained from
[124] the school teacher's diary. Examples follow:

[192] Ordination: Total cost 8,000, including food 1400,
liquor 800. Guests contributed 4000.

• [852] Top-knot tonsure: Total cost 1550, including new
utensils 550; 6 priests fed; each priest
given 12 baht; 12 (2) pin-(1) toos filled to
take to the temple; 100 duck eggs donated,
and 300 baht received from 30-40 guests.

[744] Cremation¹: Total cost 40,000², including about 10,000
for food; 61 priests fed³. About 500
guests contributed 4377.

[875] Homage-to-the-teacher ritual:
A: Total cost 715, including food 565 and
liquor 150; 40 tang (800 liters) fish and
3 tang Chinese noodles donated.
B: Total cost, 11,000⁴.

[585] Wedding: A: Thai Buddhist: Total cost 5000.
Guests gave 2300.

[584] B: Rite of forgiveness after elopement:
a meal, with 5 bottles of liquor.

[184] C: Moslem: 2 buffalo slaughtered.
400 guests.

585 Arranged marriages could be large merit-making affairs,
222 with a huge procession from one house to the other of twenty-
four "pairs" of specified foods, i.e. two bearers each of
sugar cane, fruits, sweetmeats and other things. At more
[675] modest weddings and the rite of forgiveness for a couple who
had eloped, food might differ from the usual fare only by in-
cluding the three essentials of a wedding: pork, chicken and
alcohol.

273 Increased consumption of alcoholic beverages during the
194 ceremonial season was indicated by the sales of one local
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1. Cremation was the last of several rites at death.
Private 7-day, 30-day and 100-day rites were held, when
priests came to the home to chant and to be feasted.

2. With cooperative assistance from well-situated
relatives in Bangkok.

3. The whole chapter of priests from Wat Bang Chan
[192] was always included at cremations, and often others from a
[744] distance.

4. See list of food purchased, Appendix A, pp. 102-103.